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U.S. May Order Home Families in Viet-Nam

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Stepped-up Communist Viet Cong terrorism in South Viet-Nam is forcing the United States to consider evacuation of American dependents there.

It was learned that President Johnson has the problem on his desk for decision.

Yesterday, the State Department announced that an Army military police company "will be sent to Viet-Nam in the near future . . . to provide protection to U.S. personnel and installations."

On Sunday, William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, told a TV audience the United States might have to send back the two military police units it withdrew from South Viet-Nam last December.

As of the end of February, there were 1811 American dependents in Viet-Nam—wives and children of U.S. military and embassy personnel and of construction employees under contract to the U.S. government.

Almost half of this number represented the dependents of military personnel.

In weighing the pros and cons of evacuating U.S. dependents, the President has to consider these factors:

- An evacuation is an open acknowledgement that the war is going badly and that the U.S. does not think it can provide adequate protection for its families in South Viet-Nam.

- Failing to evacuate dependents may expose them to future terrorist tactics against American-frequented theaters or schools.

While it might be undesirable for Mr. Johnson's Administration to go before the electorate in November in a "retreat" position regarding South Viet-Nam, it might be far worse to go before the electorate with a list of casualties to U.S. dependents.

The fact that the President has to weigh these arguments would indicate divided opinion in Washington.

The Pentagon, which has to consider the morale problem of its troops—some 16,000 of them—reportedly is reluctant to give its blessings to any evacuation move.

Others in Washington, however, are believed to be urging the President to order the evacuation of dependents.

For some time now, U.S. schoolchildren have been going to their classes in Saigon in heavily guarded buses, complete with protective grenades strung to the outside. And they have been playing in schoolyards guarded by sentries with fixed bayonets.

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